



## State of New Jersey

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## Union Township to Support Agricultural Planning and Other Priorities with Highlands Council Grant Funding

CHESTER, N.J. — At its most recent meeting, the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) approved a Petition for Plan Conformance from Union Township in Hunterdon County. The approved petition allocates more than \$76,000 in grant funding to advance local planning efforts in the Township.

A rural community in northwestern Hunterdon County, Union Township is home to the Spruce Run Reservoir, one of the first water supply facilities to be constructed and operated by the state and the third largest reservoir after Round Valley and Wanaque reservoirs, also in the New Jersey Highlands. The Township is bisected by Interstate 78/US Route 22 and State Route 173, which runs parallel to the Interstate.

“In addition to the Spruce Run Recreation Area and all it has to offer, Union Township is home to beautiful woodland, historic, and agricultural landscapes, as well as a robust commercial and industrial area along its interstate corridor,” notes Lisa J. Plevin, Highlands Council Executive Director. “This diversity creates many opportunities for the Township and we’re excited to help advance their local priorities with the grant funding and expertise that we can provide.”

Among those priorities is an update to the municipality’s Farmland Preservation Plan, which was last updated in 2010. Agricultural lands account for approximately one quarter of the Township, and its history is closely tied to the agricultural industry. The approved Petition for Plan Conformance includes an Implementation Plan and Schedule (IPS) that allocates up to \$35k in grant funding for this work. Also included in the Township’s IPS are funds for updates to its Environmental Resource

Inventory (ERI) using the Highlands Council's new Interactive ERI tool, and development of a municipal Stormwater Management Plan.

Beyond what's included in the IPS, approval of the Union Township Petition opens the door to a wide range of planning grants from the Highlands Council. Planning projects that advance the goals of the Highlands Act are generally eligible for grants. This includes protection of natural resources, transportation planning, sustainable economic development, redevelopment, recreation, and historic preservation among many others. All Highlands Council grants are non-competitive and require no matching funds.

"Because it hosts the Spruce Run Reservoir, Union Township plays an important role in the protection of water resources for New Jersey," stated Highlands Council Chairman, Carl Richko. "We are very pleased to be working in partnership with them to support their stewardship efforts.

Today's approval by the Council brings the total number of approved municipal petitions for Plan Conformance to 53. Additional details about the Township's Petition, including Highlands Council recommendations and specific funding allocations related to Plan Conformance implementation, are available in the "Final Consistency Review and Recommendations Report," which can be found along with all other Petition materials on the Union Township page of the Highlands Council website: [www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planconformance/union\\_twp.html](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planconformance/union_twp.html).

Actions taken by the Council at this meeting will take effect following the Governor's review and consideration of the meeting minutes, up to 10 business days from receipt of the minutes. Materials related to this meeting including resolutions, presentations, audio, and minutes will be posted at: [www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/index.html](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/index.html) (click on April 21 meeting).

*The Highlands Council is a regional planning agency, established in 2004 with the passage of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and charged with implementation of the Act. More information is available at [www.nj.gov/njhighlands](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands).*

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